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## Separation-individuation and older adolescents with disruptive classroom behavior

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**SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION AND  
OLDER ADOLESCENTS WITH  
DISRUPTIVE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR**

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**A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirement for the Degree  
Doctor of Education**

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**by  
Eunice Lockwood  
April, 1995**

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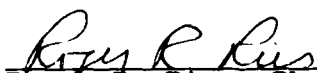
SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION AND  
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by

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother who instilled within me a desire for learning; to Bill, my husband who challenged and supported me; and to Esther and Wayne, my children, who gently encouraged me to complete a goal with "practice what you teach."

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing number of students with disruptive classroom behaviors in the public school setting is an area of critical concern for educators. According to Curtis and Batche (1991), recent laws have increased the possibility of more students with behavioral concerns to be in attendance on the public school rolls. This increase in students includes an estimated 650,000 previously unserved children who entered into public schools following the passage of Public Law 94-142 (Education of the Handicapped Act) concerning the education of children with handicapping conditions in 1975, and later re-authorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. It includes those attending because of expanded age ranges with the passage of Public Law 99-457 in 1986, concerning early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with known or suspected handicapping conditions. This increase also includes those medically at-risk whether given extended life by advances in medical technology or those influenced by parental drug abuse. Some of these students are considered to be more at risk for behavior problems in the classroom.

McGarvey (1994) reports that "daily in the United States, 6,250 teachers are threatened with bodily injury; 260 actually are harmed" (p. 29). Thus, in the public school classroom, not only is there an increase in the number of students at risk for disruptive behavior, the type of behaviors being exhibited are more severe.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between older public high school students with disruptive classroom behaviors and psychological development as described by the subphases in the adolescent separation-individuation process.

### Theoretical Rationale

Corey (1992) states that recent psychoanalytic theories support "predictable developmental sequences in which the early experiences of the self shift in relation to an expanding awareness of others" (p. 112). These patterns of self/other interpersonal relationships then become established and influence later relating. According to Corey, Margaret Mahler's theory of psychological separation-individuation is classified as one of the newer key approaches in the evolving psychoanalytic theories of self psychology and object-relations.

Blos (1967) supports Mahler's concept of the early infant individuation process yet believes that a second separation-individuation in adolescence precedes the mature state of adulthood. The function of the second adolescent individuation is to advance the growth of the separate self and to further the internalization of the self representations and ego development. Blos's view is supported by what he perceives as a constraining parent/child relationship during childhood. Up to the point of adolescence, the child's perceptions are rooted in the family's interpretation of reality and are dependent on the family roles and norms for external

support and control. Parents communicate to their children what is important to believe, what has value, what behaviors are considered acceptable, and which opinions have worth. Consequently, prior to adolescence, the basis of the child's perceptions are formed from reflections of their parent's perceptions. Blos believes that the process of the second individuation permits the adolescent to develop a perception of self and the world that is disengaged from the parents. This disengagement from the internalized influences of the parents, if successful, allows for a simultaneous sense of self as a distinct and unique person along with an emotional connectedness that is on going.

Josselson (1988) extends Blos's theory that successful progress into adulthood requires a second individuation process during the adolescent period. Josselson purports that individuation and connectedness are not in opposition but that individuation occurs in the context of relationships. The adolescent who has experienced a secure attachment to the parents is better equipped psychologically to individuate and to adjust to new situations.

Josselson (1988) overlays the subphases of infant separation-individuation onto the subphases of adolescent development. One of the most critical aspects is considered to be the rapprochement subphase which involves an integration of connectedness and separateness. In the first separation-individuation, the walking toddler's attempts to separate from the mother denote the practicing subphase. During the second separation-individuation, after premature concern with

independence, the adolescent often establishes closer ties with the parents. Josselson (1988) holds that, "The adolescent, as much as the toddler, brings his new ideas and his new ways of being home, to be recognized in the context of ongoing connection, to bring the relationship up to date" (p. 95). In childhood the early steps away are balanced by movement toward; during adolescent rapprochement, early attitudinal and emotional pulling away is balanced by later renewed concern about parents' views and support.

Schneider (1992) addresses issues of separation-individuation and relates them to educational and clinical rehabilitation concerns. He believes that emotionally unstable adolescents react to change in the life cycle, and each transition in the separation-individuation process may set off an internal conflict. These "fixation points" parallel the stages and subphases of separation-individuation.

Schneider (1992) states that if the fixation point is associated with the autistic phase, the adolescent may be too withdrawn to form a relationship or make contact with the outside world. If the fixation point is associated with the symbiotic phase, the adolescent will look to the clinician too eagerly; they will feel secure in having somebody tell them what to do and making decisions will be difficult. If the adolescent is able to get through these first two phases, the chances for adaptive functioning are greater.

In the first separation-individuation subphase of differentiation, Schneider believes that if there is a fixation point, the adolescent will move slowly with the

clinician to explore ways of experiencing independence and will crave constant feedback. In the second separation-individuation subphase, practicing, the adolescent starts to function more independently, much like the toddler trying to walk. The professional is used for emotional refueling. During the third subphase of separation-individuation, rapprochement, as the emotionally less able adolescent moves away from the parental figure to merge with the outside world, she may have to deal with significant separation anxiety. "At the end of the rapprochement crisis, personality characteristics will come into play and slowly become consolidated" (p. 142). This brings the adolescent to the fourth subphase of separation-individuation, object constancy. With the consolidation of individuality and development of emotional object constancy, the adolescent will be able to move toward adaptive independence.

The current study attempted to explore adolescent separation-individuation based on The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence, and adaptive-maladaptive classroom behavior as measured by the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form, in relation to the subjects known discipline records.

#### Definition of Terms

**Blocks:** Blocks to natural strivings occur when combined forces of factors such as temperament and learned behavior interact with depriving or abusing environments resulting in coping styles that are the best compromise

for the child yet are too rigid and inappropriate for adaptation in a different environment. (Thompson and Patterson, 1986)

**Differentiation:** The first subphase of the separation-individuation process. In the infant process, this involves an initial physical dependence on the nurturing figure which decreases as crawling and walking skills allow the first moving away from the nurturing figure and the infant begins to perceive his body as distinct from the nurturing figure. (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975) In the parallel adolescent process the early teen begins to distance himself from his family or parent ties. The behavioral shift denotes an exploration of the parental views and values. He begins to establish an identity separate from his parents/family.

**Fixation point:** Failure to move normally through transition points from dependence to independence in the separation-individuation process. (Schneider, 1992)

**Individuation:** Development of the psychological perception of oneself as a separate individual.

**Libidinal Object Constancy:** In the fourth subphase, the infant is able to perceive himself as a separate individual and to maintain object constancy. The infant internalizes the mother image and can relate without losing his own self identity. In the adolescent phase, the teen attains a new, higher level of psychic individuality and emotional object constancy. He is able



to internalize the family/parental image with its related values and to interact and relate without losing his own self identity.

**Normal autism:** The psychic state of the new born infant in which he is mainly unaware with only fleeting periods of mental alertness. (Mahler et al., 1975)

**Normal Symbiosis:** The psychic state of the infant following autism when he perceives himself as one with or as fused with the primary nurturer's identity.

**Practicing:** Practicing in the infant subphase of separation-individuation includes distancing and exploration of the non-mother space yet returning periodically to temporarily re-attach and refuel emotionally. (Mahler et al., 1975) In the second phase, the adolescent explores the non-parent/family space in what is often observed as teen rebellion and experimentation. The family is however, still a critical reference point for the adolescent to temporarily re-attach, emotionally refuel, receive feed back, and attain reinforcement of his behaviors.

**Rapprochement:** Rapprochement during the infancy phase includes an increased awareness of separateness with a concomitant sense of dependency. The infant needs both the mother, and to protect his autonomy; he wants both dependency and mobility. This creates noted anxiety and ambivalence. In the teen phase, there is also the dual need for dependency and independency with the associated

anxiety. There is fear of losing physical and emotional contact with significant others and simultaneously a strong need for autonomy and mobility.

Separation: Separation is the psychological emergence from previously perceived fusion or union with the primary love object.

### Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined in the current study.

1. Older adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions will show significantly more clinically related social/emotional maladaptive behaviors in social problems, delinquent behavior problems, and aggressive behavior problems when compared to their matched control peers with no history of disciplinary suspensions.

2. Older adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions will show significantly less psychological development in rapprochement: separation anxiety, rapprochement: engulfment anxiety, differentiation: nurturance seeking, differentiation: peer enmeshment, differentiation: teacher enmeshment, practicing: practicing-mirroring, practicing: need denial, and libidinal object constancy: healthy separation when compared to their control matched peers with no history of disciplinary suspensions.

### Sample Description and General Data Gathering Procedures

The sample for this study consisted of two groups of 16, 17, and 18 year old students from a public high school in the Tidewater area of Virginia. The selected public high school population represented socioeconomic and cultural diversity so as to allow for increased generalizability of findings. The cultural/racial diversity of the selected school included 42% whites, 57% blacks, and 1% other including American Indian, Oriental, and Hispanic. The socioeconomic diversity was identified by number of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunches. Twenty-nine percent of the population qualified by federal guidelines according to family income and number of people in the family unit.

Group I (target) included students who had received 3 or more administrative disciplinary school suspensions relating to disruptive classroom behaviors within the previous year and/or two suspensions during the first four months of the current school year. Group II (control) consisted of students who had no administrative disciplinary suspensions within the last year.

Participants for the study were identified through school records. Group I was selected from the school's discipline records; Group II was randomly selected from school records of students without a history of disciplinary suspensions. Data relating to classroom adjustment was gathered from classroom teachers through use of the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Form. Data relating to psychological development in separation-individuation was gathered through

administration of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence to each of the participating students.

### Limitations of Study

Several possible limitations existed for this study. First, as with all relational studies, this study is limited from determining causal patterns with any degree of certainty; only observed relationships can be cited. Second, determinants of behavior are extremely complex, interwoven variables. Possible causes relating to behavior include not only the interactional relationships explored in this study, but also genetically endowed constitutions and biophysical make-ups. Third, some classroom behavior problems are the result of psychologically documented specific processing deficits or learning difficulties and as such may be remediated by educational strategies. Fourth, due to the type of student in Group I, some respondents may not have been willing to answer all questions honestly and openly. Respondents in Group I may have been more easily influenced by peer expectations and answered accordingly.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Historical and Theoretical Development

The current study is historically based on the tenants of Mahler's model which focuses on the mother-child interactions during the first three years of life. Mahler purports that separation-individuation is a developmental sequence which begins in early neonatal life and progresses to an awareness of social reality and a separate identity (Mahler et al., 1975). This separation-individuation process is described as two complementary developments. Separation involves the child's emerging from the early close relationship with the mother, and individuation consists of the achievements that mark the child's awareness of his/her own individual characteristics (Mahler et al., 1975).

The process of separation-individuation includes three developmental phases with the third phase divided into four subphases (Bartolomucci and Taylor, 1991). The first phase is normal autism, the second phase is normal symbiosis, and the third phase is subdivided into four subphases of differentiation, practicing, rapprochement, and libidinal object constancy.

Carstairs states,

Separation-individuation presupposes a prior state of emotional fusion with the mother in which the infant is unable to distinguish between himself and herself. Gradually, he emerges from his initial undifferentiated, sleep-like state into this state

of symbiosis and from this, into a more structured existence shaped by his own developing personality. This process is likened to a second birth. (p. 71-72)

Phase one, normal autism, happens during the first 3 to 4 weeks of life. During this phase the baby sleeps a great deal with only fleeting states of arousal when he feels hunger, pain, or discomfort from a soiled diaper which stimulates crying. The infant is content without an awareness of the difference between attempts to reduce tension and the actions of the caretaker to reduce hunger and other tensions. During this phase, the mother satisfies the needed tasks of feeding, nurturing, and protecting the child from the frustrations of the basic physiological needs. (Mahler et al., 1975)

Phase two, normal symbiosis, occurs roughly during the 3 to 8 month time period. In this second phase a social symbiosis exists between the infant and the mother. The infant perceives that the two are "... an omnipotent system--a dual unity within one common boundary" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 44). "...The infant has a pronounced dependency on the mother. She...is clearly a partner and not just an interchangeable part. The infant seems to expect a very high degree of emotional attunement with the mother" (Corey, 1992, p. 113). According to Mahler, once this relationship or bonding occurs, the groundwork is set for separation and individuation to take place.

Phase three, separation-individuation, from approximately 5 to 36 months of age, is subdivided into four subphases. These include differentiation,

practicing, rapprochement, and libidinal object constancy. Each phase builds on and is influenced by the completion of the previous phases. These subphases may overlap yet from a developmental point of view, each phase is qualitatively different and makes a distinct contribution to the child's psychological growth. (Mahler et al., 1975)

Mahler et al. (1975) believe that the subphase of differentiation at 5 to 7 months signals a behavioral shift in the infant. He is more alert and increasingly aware of his caregiver. The infant may smile and act pleased toward the mother yet may react soberly at the sight of strangers. The infant begins to explore his mother visually and tactually. Toward the close of this state the infant will look for the mother's expression before engaging in an action. The child now has a definite bond with the mother and has an active social participation with her.

The next subphase, practicing, takes place at 7 to 16 months of age. Mahler et al. (1975) state that during the practicing subphase the infant begins to distance himself from the mother then periodically returns to make contact again. He actively explores the not-mother environment yet needs the mother for a stable reference point and periodically returns for "emotional refueling" (p. 69).

Mahler et al. (1975) hypothesize the third subphase to be rapprochement, which lasts from 16 to 24 months of age. During this time the child becomes increasingly aware of his separateness from his mother and because of increased physical ability, becomes more independent. He

begins to question his omnipotence, feels a return of dependency on the mother, and then becomes anxious when she is not there. "This is a difficult and painful time for both mother and child as the child works out an increased need for mother while protecting achieved autonomy" (Bartolomucci and Taylor, 1991, p. 393).

The last subphase Mahler et al. (1975) call libidinal object constancy which involves the 24 to 36 month period. This phase involves two main tasks: "(1) the achievement of a definite, in certain aspects lifelong, individuality, and (2) the attainment of a certain degree of object constancy" (p. 109). The child is able to internalize an image of the mother and this constant inner image enables the child to function independently as a separate self. The child begins to be able to relate without being overwhelmed with fear of losing his sense of self, identity or individuality.

Mahler and McDevitt (1980) believe that if these four subphases are successfully achieved, then early childhood separation-individuation has been achieved. The child will have developed a foundational awareness of identity and he will differentiate self from object. There will be a decreasing tie to the primary love object and a progressive internal representation of that relationship. As this happens, the child is considered to have developed autonomy, individuation, self-constancy, and cohesiveness of the self.

Abrams and Goldman (1976) believe that the process of separation-individuation, which Mahler describes in the developmental process of infancy, is repeated again during the adolescent period of growth. The earlier



dependency struggles are reactivated in the adolescent, and the teenager must now separate himself from the fusion of the family, much as the child separated himself from the mother figure. Concomitant with this separation is the task of crystallizing a sense of unique personal identity. Partial regression to an undifferentiated phase may be expected and evidenced as anxiety which in the academic environment interferes with school performance.

Paralleling the earlier infant's love affair with the world as he begins to walk, the adolescent feels self-aggrandizement and devaluation of the parent as he experiences the exhilarating high emotions of physical maturation. As the adolescent gains mastery of his new physical appearance and his changed self-concept, he uses his peers for refueling much as the exploring toddler returned to his mother figure. Separation-individuation in the adolescence phase differs, however, from the one in infancy in that during the early phase actual physical autonomy feeds into the psychological differentiation, while in the adolescent separation, the process happens on an intrapsychic level. When problems arise during the second separation-individuation process, the psychological distress will negatively impact adaptive behavior in both the home and school environments.  
(Abrams & Goldman)

Quintana and Kerr (1993), building on Mahler, Blos and Josselson, investigated supportive relationships involving separateness and connectedness and nonsupportive relationships involving separateness and connectedness in college students. They hypothesize that

the progression is not linear going from dependence to independence unless adaptive forms of connectedness and separateness are involved.

Students who had supportive relationships with parents, other authority figures, and peers, were associated with freedom from psychological complaints. "These students' adjustment as measured by freedom from complaints of depression was associated with their involvement in relationships in which their interpersonal needs of separateness, nurturance, and mirroring were gratified" (Quintana & Kerr, 1993, p. 353). Conversely, "Students' participation in relationships characterized by separation anxiety, rejection expectancy, engulfment anxiety, or denial of dependency was associated with psychological complaints, especially depression" (p. 353). Thus Quintana and Kerr support that certain forms of connectedness and separateness are related to adaptiveness, while other forms of connectedness and separateness are associated with psychological distress.

### Critique

While there have been studies exploring the possible relationship between progression through separation-individuation (both infant and adolescent processes) and adaptive functioning, there is little research addressing the older high school student within the public school setting. Abrams and Goldmans' work, involves case studies of behavior and learning problems in adolescents. The present study proposes that group studies are needed to support the earlier case studies.

Other studies of separation-individuation and adolescents, such as Schneider's and including Abrams and Goldmans' approach the issues from the clinical setting. They write of the "psychiatrically disabled clients" (Schneider, 1992, p. 143) and treatment within the clinical setting. Clinical knowledge and treatment studies are important however studies are needed which represent the present population of adolescents in the every day work field of the public school setting. According to Curtis and Batsche (1991), recent laws have increased the possibility of more students with significant behavior problems to be in attendance on the public school roles. These children include an estimated 650,000 previously unserved children, those attending because of expanded age ranges, and those medically at-risk whether given extended life by advances in medical technology or those influenced by parental drug abuse. Such students are considered to be more at risk for behavior problems in the classroom. This proposed study addresses a rapidly expanding area of concern by studying adolescents not in the clinic but in their real life day to day functioning within the public school.

A very limited number of group studies, such as Quintana and Kerr's (1993), have been completed relating progression through separation-individuation to college adjustment. The population parameters of college studies is however automatically biased by selection from a narrow population pool. Studies are needed that are representative of the general population including both college potential students and non-college potential students.

In summary, research is needed which expands on the previous case studies, which reaches beyond the clinical focus, and which is more representative of the general population. The present study attempts to add to a previously incomplete field of knowledge by addressing separation-individuation as it relates to adaptive/maladaptive behavior of older high school students within the public school setting.

#### Descriptive Variables: Review of Research

Blos, Josselson, and others extend Mahler's model of early infant psychological development as also descriptive of the adolescent psychological development. They support that a second individuation process occurs as the adolescent progresses toward adulthood. Mahler's third phase, Separation-Individuation, includes four subphases - differentiation, practicing, rapprochement, and libidinal object constancy - which are the descriptive variables of the present study.

According to Schneider (1992) each individual moves through more than one separation and individuation during the life span and most transitions are smooth. However this process is sometimes impeded and Schneider refers to these times as "fixation points" which result in emotional disturbance in the adolescent process. Thompson and Patterson (1986) refer to "blocks" which impede the normal sequence of psychological development and result in disturbed "coping styles" with dysfunctional assumptions about self in relation to the world rather than psychological disorder.

"Fixation points" or "blocks" in the four subphases of separation-individuation - 1) differentiation, 2) practicing, 3) rapprochement, and 4) libidinal object constancy - represent the descriptive variables for the current study. A review of research is presented as it relates to each of the four individual subphases of separation-individuation.

#### Descriptive Variable 1: Differentiation

Levine, Green, and Millon (1986) believe that failure to achieve differentiation or a fixation results when individuals have a less than adequate symbiotic attachment or phase. These people have strong dependency needs, they expect significant others to gratify these needs, and they additionally pair positive feeling with their expectations. Interpersonal relationships are associated with feelings of merging or entering a state of oneness with another individual. Interactions appear intimate and enmeshed. The self-object boundary is diffused. During the adolescent phase, Levine et al. (1986) support two clusters of behavior as characteristic: dependency/nurturance seeking and interpersonal enmeshment.

Thompson and Patterson (1986) hypothesize that blocks to normal progression from symbiosis to differentiation result from attachments that are either deficient, that involve discontinuity, or are distorted. As a result, the child will develop a coping style that is dependent, and passive with feelings of inadequacy. For children, symptoms of "a block at this stage include:

a low level of expressive speech, failure to make use of transitional objects, insistence upon being carried, thumbsucking, and other infantile behaviors" (p. 389).

According to Thompson and Patterson (1985), four general factors are purported to be represented in the symbiosis/differentiation block. The first factor involves high anxiety and clinging: symptoms may involve misbehavior at home, easily frightened, crying, obsessive thoughts, and an under or over alertness to the environment. The second factor involves under-responsiveness. The third factor relates to seeking reassurance from either adults or peers. And, the fourth factor involves internalized aggression which is "characterized by extreme panic or catastrophic reaction in response to ordinary events, and self-injurious behavior, such as suicide gestures, self mutilation, biting, and so forth" (p. 56).

Hofer (1989) holds that fixation at the subphase of differentiation correlates with a psychological defense of manipulation in the anti-social personality. The individual creates a fantasy image of an idealized mother that is used as protective defense against the awareness of the inadequate mother and early emotional abandonment. "As part of the defense, maternally directed aggression is redirected toward non-maternal targets in order to maintain the perfection of the idealized image and the relationship with that image" (p. 96).

Hofer (1989) believes that as split-off feelings of anger toward the mother attempt to surface in conscious awareness, the individual copes by directing his aggressive impulses toward another target which may even

be himself. This allows him to preserve the fantasized ideal mother image which is what he has as the core of his own undifferentiated identity. The ideal maternal image is perpetuated as the person denies his own individuality and as he redirects his anger toward others and wards off projected danger to his undifferentiated fusion with the ideal image. Self-injurious acts may even be attempted since fusion with the maternal image results in perceiving their own body as external and not self. Thus, fixation at the point of differentiation may result in anti-social manipulation which "can now be seen as an essential identity-stabilizing defense mechanism, serving to protect an idealized maternal image at the core of his self-image" (p. 97).

Quintana and Kerr (1993) in a study of college students report that relationships which support satisfying forms of separateness (differentiation) associated positively with significantly less depressive complaints and with adaptiveness. Their research suggests that college students are helped by parental relationships that acknowledge and support the student's separateness. This adaptive separateness or differentiation is considered related to both the subphases of childhood and the overlapping subphase of adolescent development.

Quintana and Kerr (1993) state that their findings support and enhance Josselson's theory that mature psychological development is associated with supportive development of separateness or differentiation. College students with freedom from complaints of depression were involved in relationships where interpersonal needs of

adaptive separateness were gratified.

Goodrich (1985), from the clinical residential setting, holds that nearly all of the adolescent patients have a history of early childhood stress. This early infantile experience may foster various patterns of maladaptive behavior, one of which relates to symbiotic lack of self-differentiation. During the elementary school years, these primitively organized students evidence "difficulties in impulse control, learning dysfunctions, or schizoid withdrawal and have usually been referred by the school for some form of remedial intervention" (p. 24).

According to Goodrich (1985), the families of these students have one or both parents that are symbiotically involved with the child. When the child reaches adolescence the intra psychic and interpersonal conflicts center around symbiotic and individuation issues, especially when there is a tendency toward schizoid or depressed characteristics. Individuals with regressed personality development need to address issues of splitting the "bad" and the "good" parent image and this conflict becomes exaggerated in severely disturbed adolescents. Issues for treatment often involve aggression either toward self or toward the mothering image, possessiveness of the "good object," paranoid feelings and distrust, and loss of the awareness of ego boundary and the object. Successful treatment involves changing internalized perceptions which foster corrective symbiotic attachment and maturation into a clear sense of separate identity.



### Critique

Existing studies such as Goodrich's and Hofer's deal with extremes of the population. Goodrich uses disturbed adolescents in residential centers for long term treatment. Hofer uses adult inmates from a maximum security penitentiary. Studies with extreme populations such as Goodrich's and Hofer's are needed to assist in clarity of definition, yet the studies need to be extended to the general population in order to measure symbiosis/differentiation as it exists on a continuum. The population of the public school yields fertile ground for such a study because that is the population which feeds both the adolescent treatment centers and eventually the penitentiary. The present study attempts to address the general population of the public high school where educators are now mandated to pursue consistent student attendance in some form, even when that student has a history of classroom disruptiveness.

Levine's et al. study and the Quintana and Kerr's study include a more general population however these studies address mainly college age individuals. Levine's et al. study had 90 high school students in a study of 305 with the remainder college students. All in the Quintana and Kerr study were college students. These studies not only use an older population than the public high school, it is by far a more select and therefore biased group by virtue of their very college attendance. Studies are desperately needed that include the high school age student within the general population of the public high school.

The Thompson and Patterson work which included ages up to 17, actually represents a younger population than the public high school. Of the total 277, only 9 were 13 or above. Thus again, there is a void in research representing the general population of the public high school. It is the general population of the public high school that the present study chooses to address.

#### Descriptive Variable 2: Practicing Mirroring

Thompson and Patterson (1986) hypothesize that blocks during the practicing subphase of separation-individuation, when the individual is developmentally exploring non-mother/family space, may encourage a continuation of a style of relating that is narcissistic and omnipotent. This block may result when there is a lack of empathy in the mirroring process, when there is a constitutional defect, or when there is a severe fear of object loss. "Such an omnipotent and narcissistic individual is incapable of forming meaningful relationships and essentially views other people as objects to manipulate to his or her own ends" (p. 390).

According to Love (1985), Thompson and Patterson's (1986) work identifies three characteristics relating to the practicing subphase. The first factor was that of control with problem behaviors such as "showing off, clowning, provocative behavior, disobedience, and disobedience following praise for good behavior (that is, countercontrol)" (p. 57). The second factor "was characterized by the need for immediate gratification, becoming upset if things do not go the child's way, and

becoming very excited in groups" (p. 57). The third factor involved a "dislike for being alone, and the need for constant attention and admiration" (p. 57).

Levine et al. (1986) believe that fixation points in the practicing subphase of separation-individuation, initially in the early infant stage and overlapped by the adolescent phase, result in strong narcissistic characteristics and self-centeredness. This narcissism and self-centeredness is "often simultaneously reinforced by another person's feedback, praise, or admiration (mirroring)" (p. 126). Empathic failures by significant others are suggested to impede the internal source of self-evaluation. The individual actually self-devaluates himself but behaves as if he overvalues himself and seeks excessive attention to reinforce his image and separate self. Adolescent experimentation and rebelliousness are believed to be attempts to gain attention and reinforcement for being separate from, yet still belonging to and needing feedback from the parental base.

Cary (1979) also relates acting out in adolescence to the practicing subphase of separation-individuation. He purports that acting out is necessary to normal adolescent development yet becomes the foundation for abnormal parental attachment which then acts as a block to adolescent individuation.

According to Cary (1979), as the adolescent explores and acts out various identities in his attempts to establish a separate identity, parental authority will be challenged. This acting out is an attempt to receive recognition and validation of the developing identity. The process of becoming a distinct individual is

complicated by the simultaneous ambivalent desire to receive support, guidance and limits from the parents. The process involves a series of disengagements then re-engagements as the adolescent reorganizes his identity by balancing parental values and standards with outside influences and his independent strivings. Conflict may result when parents are unable to validate and acknowledge the adolescent's developing identity.

Cary (1979) supports that a confounding variable or block to normal acting out of new identities happens when parents have not developed a way to regulate their own self-esteem and then require the adolescent to act out the parents' own projected conflicts. "The adolescent becomes extrinsically valued as a narcissistic object" (p. 387). The adolescent is controlled as an extension of the parent and is not valued for his separateness. These parents become threatened by separation and react with rage and devalue the emerging adolescent identity.

Cary (1979) believes that the adolescent becomes involved with this parental narcissistic control because of fear of parental loss and because of the power they then hold over the parent. The price is however costly to the adolescent as he attempts to both achieve recognition as an independent identity and at the same time act out the parents' conflicts. A fixation point results when the acting out no longer serves the process of adolescent individuation. The purpose of the adolescent acting out becomes confused, and the more forceful the projected narcissistic need, the greater the struggle. As this cycle intensifies, oppositional acting out will increase.

Meyer and Phillips (1990) compare normal adolescent development and suicidal adolescents from an object-attachment approach, impacted by parent abuse of alcohol. In an alcoholic family, if the primary "love-object" is unavailable, unpredictable, or belligerent during infancy, the result may be narcissistic deprivation or injury during the practicing subphase. The infant is then at risk for becoming vulnerable, mistrustful, and fearful. There is an internalized fear of abandonment and shame without a developed sense of confidence or adequacy. Separating from the parent is painful resulting in feelings of isolation and desertion. And, since the self has been unable to differentiate from the parent to develop a self awareness, the result is a sense of powerlessness.

Meyer and Phillips (1990) believe that as the child remains an extension of the alcoholic love-object, there is disruption in the capacity to not only experience self but also relate to others. During adolescence the individual experiences rage over the unavailable, lost love-object and attempts to find a soothing substitute in the outside world. Guilt over the feelings of rage are repressed and are changed into hatred against self and others. However, there is no defined sense of self, or established primary attachment so they are unable to transfer to peer attachment. The suicide-vulnerable teen feels a shame-based aloneness and isolation, has not developed a self identity or self-love, and is vulnerable to rejection by others because of the absence of the mirroring feedback.

According to Meyer and Phillips (1990) the

adolescent is unable to achieve the alcoholic parent's expectations, yet feels responsible for and simultaneously powerless. Attempts to cope result in a chronic emotional numbness. The losses of childhood (attachment, differentiation, and feedback) result in feelings of depression. In their search for a safe place to escape the pain, the adolescent distortedly perceives suicide as not only a way of being self-capable and self-effective, but also as the promise of a safe, peaceful place.

Thus, impaired separation-individuation results in distorted relating, and sadomasochistic feelings with limited identity, internalized rage, and a desire for revenge.

These factors contribute to a distorted reality that leaves adolescents unable to attach to others in order to grieve the loss of a consistently available primary caregiver who reflects their significance and lovability, and the loss of a 'true self' (I count, I am competent, I am). To block the resulting pain, such children develop defense mechanisms, which become ineffective in adolescence, when attachment to peers and non-family individuals is paramount. To compensate for the resulting feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, the children/adolescents may choose the 'safe place' of suicide. (Meyer and Phillips, 1990, p. 557)

Abrams and Goldman (1976) hypothesize that problems in utilization of the learning skills may occur as a result of impeded separation-individuation. They discuss a variety of possible constellations involving adverse

environmental influences that may retard the separation-individuation process with overlaps from both infancy and adolescents. They support that all adolescents go through the separation-individuation process but their focus is on the adolescent in trouble and seeking clinical intervention. "Because of the over-riding importance of school during these years, it is often (but not necessarily) in the realm of interferences with learning that the adolescent signals his psychological distress" (p. 42).

In one case, Abrams and Goldman (1976) describe the block in learning with such characteristics as "mediocre performance," "an almost complete lack of motivation to invest himself in anything," "lazy," "a dawdler," "messy and haphazard manner," and "nothing apparently could capture his interest" (p. 42), in spite of being an extremely intelligent adolescent. These school problems started suddenly at adolescence with early physical development and puberty by age 10. This adolescent was described as physically ready to explore the world (practicing) but emotionally attached and therefore fearful and withdrawn. Parental controls were permissive and he was overwhelmed.

Abrams and Goldman's (1976) second adolescent case illustration evidenced characteristics of declining grades, inconsistent classroom cooperation, antagonism and abusiveness to teachers, agitation, resistance, and mood swings from excitement to depression. The roots of her problems were believed to have begun in the practicing subphase when she was exposed to a less than nurturing mother and a series of indifferent governesses.

Abrams and Goldman's (1976) last case illustration was described as "never wanted to go to school," "unhappy," and "school phobia" (p. 43). Her school history included multiple school changes and her health problems necessitated multiple extended periods out of school. The mother was described as using the daughter as a mother replacement to compensate for the mother's own unavailable mother and additionally as a spouse replacement. As a result, the adolescent was unable to explore non-mother space. In conclusion, blocks to periodic distancing/practicing may result in blocks to utilization of the learning skills.

#### Critique

Many studies relating to the practicing subphase of separation-individuation, including those done by Cary, Meyer & Phillips, Abrams & Goldman, and Thompson & Patterson, all explore the issues using a younger population. The stated studies used adolescents aged 16, 13, 14, and "under 17" consecutively. The older adolescent is under represented in the literature. For this reason, the author of this paper proposes that studies are needed which are representative of the older student within the public high school.

Cary, Meyer & Phillips, and Abrams & Goldman all use case studies of extreme or clinical population, including suicidal adolescents, adolescents in trouble, and acting out adolescents. An unanswered question is, how or will such case studies of the extremes be representative of a subset within the general population of the public high school. A wider sampling with empirical studies is



needed to add to the initial body of knowledge.

A third concern relating to studies such as Cary, Meyer & Phillips, and Abrams & Goldman, is the lack of clarity in differentiating and measuring of the specific subphases of the separation-individuation process. This blurring of subphases mitigates against specific remediation goals in counseling. Further research is needed which targets the specific subphases of separation-individuation.

### Descriptive Variable 3: Rapprochement

Esman (1980) supports Mahler et al. and Blos in viewing and exploring the crucial role of the rapprochement subphase in the separation-individuation process of adolescents. Following the young adolescent's rebelliousness and experimentation (practicing subphase) is a periodic returning to the primary object seeking for security and support. Simultaneously the adolescent pushes forcefully and often loudly to separate himself from the parental force. When the adolescent feels the renewed support and closeness of the parent, he then becomes anxious with fear of engulfment and fears for the loss of the gained independence. The adolescent renews his pursuit of autonomy and will eventually search for a substitute attachment object. The rapprochement subphase is filled with ambivalence and frequent turmoil. They feel highly anxious and insecure. In normal adjustment, the rapprochement subphase is usually well under way by late adolescence and the youth is able to consolidate an integrated and realistic mental representation of both a

separate self and other-parent.

According to Esman (1980) failure to progress through the rapprochement subphase results in regression to earlier levels of adjustment which results in pathology. If there is no sense of an available protective, nurturing primary object, there will be feelings of abandonment, rage, panic, and disorganized over-activity.

Brandt and Silverman (1985) believe that the resolution of the rapprochement subphase of separation-individuation is a major developmental task of adolescence. The role of the mother and the parental relationship is seen as crucial to the adolescent's dissolving of parental dependency ties. Maternal variables purported to impact the adolescent's attempts for individuation include her personality structure, her parent function, and her fantasies about the adolescent. The adolescent is often viewed from a basis of the adult's own unresolved conflicts. Therefore the parental approach may vary from overconcern and protectiveness to a preventing of adolescent independence because the parent is unable to accept the loss.

According to Brandt and Silverman (1985) when the adolescent is unable to effectively disengage from the parental ties, behavioral symptoms may include anxiety, poor school performance, and drug abuse. The blurred and/or fused family identities push the adolescent to distance himself from the family system. Adolescent symptoms such as poor school performance and drug abuse are often used in order to maintain separation and distance from the entwinement of the family system.

Wade (1987) postulates that suicidal adolescent girls suffer from more intense separation anxiety during the rapprochement subphase of separation-individuation than do nonsuicidal adolescent girls. Many of these suicidal girls were initially involved in symbiotic relationships with their similar borderline mothers. The mother becomes threatened when the daughter pushes for separation and independence and pulls back the maternal support. The daughter experiences feelings of abandonment which surface during the conflicts of dependency/independence in the rapprochement subphase of adolescence. Acting out becomes a temporary defense mechanism for the teen to deal with the feelings of abandonment and depression.

Wade (1987) supports that the adolescent girl, caught in the symbiotic fusion with the mother, seeks relief from her intense feelings of separation anxiety. She notes that these girls "are less individuated, and form more hostile attachments with significant others than those who are non suicidal. These attachments spring from feelings of rejection and loneliness" (p. 176). From their perception, suicide permits them a type of independence and control while simultaneously creating a feeling that they are returning or escaping to safety and peace.

Levine et al. (1986) hypothesize fixation at the adolescent rapprochement subphase to be evidenced in one of two directions. The first possible direction is evidenced by intense separation anxiety with significant others perceived as abandoning. The second possible direction is evidenced by engulfment anxiety with

intimacy by significant others perceived as smothering and enveloping.

According to Levine et al. (1986) intense separation anxiety is characteristic of the adolescent who is fearful that he has lost or will lose his physical and emotional support and structure. He perceives that his primary object is unavailable or unpredictable. The adolescent may feel rejected by the primary object with associated guilt and anger. He may feel abandoned, isolated, and alone. The primary object is often idealized as all good and no bad which makes the perceived desertion even more painful. This fear of separation or physical and emotional independence during the rapprochement subphase feeds into the intense anxiety and depression.

On the other hand, Levine et al. (1986) state that pathology during this rapprochement subphase may go into the opposite direction with fear of losing the newly realized selfhood and independence. These adolescents experience engulfment anxiety. They become initially fearful that a close relationship with the primary object will envelop them and in so doing they will lose their selfhood and independence. This fear of intimacy then extends to other people, especially those perceived as controlling or overpowering.

Thompson and Patterson (1986) hypothesize that dysfunctional coping styles resulting from obstacles in the rapprochement subphase can be divided into the early and late stages of rapprochement. In the early stage, symptoms or coping styles are described as going to one of two poles: internalizing and externalizing. Internal

conflict in the child is high because of the need for both autonomy and the need for reunion. Conflict between the parents and the child also increases.

During the early rapprochement crisis, Thompson and Patterson (1986) describe two opposing styles of coping with a third which results from fluctuations between the opposite extremes. "In an emotionally shallow and depriving environment, an anxious-egocentric coping style may result as a defense against the recognition that significant others have emotionally abandoned him" (p. 391). The narcissistic defense results in symptoms of "uncontrolled aggression, poor judgement, high pain threshold, hyperactivity and impulsiveness" (p. 391). An overly involved environment may result in a coping style at the opposite pole: the anxious/conformist; symptoms may include over compliance, high performance, anxiety, phobias, compulsions, and physical complaints without organic basis. When the coping fluctuates between the poles the result is a labile borderline individual with alternating symptoms and weakened defenses involving splitting (good/bad) and projection.

Thompson and Patterson's (1986) late phase of rapprochement is characterized by a push for independence. Blocks at this stage may result in regression to earlier coping patterns or develop into either a covert-aggressive style or an aggressive-depressed style. The former is characterized by possible symptoms of "lying, cheating, stealing, forgetting, dawdling, and general failures to meet the adult's expectations" (p. 393). The aggressive-depressed coping style maybe characterized by symptoms of low self esteem,

low frustration tolerance, easily angered, sometimes abusive if criticized, defiant when disciplined, and sometimes provocative.

### Critique

The rapprochement subphase of adolescence appears to be one of the more investigated subphases of the separation-individuation process. Studies such as Esman's and Wade's yield specificity in definition and emphasize clarity of concept as necessary to formulating therapeutic plans. Clarity of definition has increased and number of empirical studies are improving.

Yet, even with the direction of existing studies being positive, there are many gaps that are as yet unexplored. Studies such as Esman's, and Brandt and Silverman's still rely on clinical case studies of extremes; there continues to be a need to test the theory using group studies within the general population.

Studies such as Brandt and Silverman's, Wade's, and Thompson and Patterson's under represent the mid to late adolescent which the present research attempts to tap. Brandt and Silverman, Wade, and Thompson and Patterson, over represent a younger population and in doing so sometimes blur the lines between the first and second phases of separation-individuation. The present study attempts to lessen this blurring by using only the late adolescent for the population.

#### Descriptive Variable 4: Libidinal Object Constancy

Thompson and Patterson (1986) state that following the rapprochement subphase, the individual enters an open-ended subphase with two main tasks: the consolidation of individuality/a functional self image and the attainment of object constancy with the intrapsychic representation of that relationship. The newly developed internal representation of the primary object/parent integrates the "good" and the "bad" images. The conflictual ambivalence over dependency/independency of the previous stage has been resolved and the child is able to accept the individuality of both himself and his parents.

Development of object constancy and consolidation of individuality allow for behaviors characterized as "responsible, helpful, flexible, and predictable. He displays an appropriate level of self-esteem, has many stable friendships, and gets pleasure from helping others" (p. 394). Love (1985) sums up the healthy functioning individual as described in the Thompson and Patterson study to include three major dimensions: "social adjustment," "healthy temperament," and "adaptability" (p. 64).

Levine et al. (1986) support a view similar to Thompson and Patterson when describing the last subphase of the separation-individuation process. They hypothesize that adolescents who have resolved the rapprochement conflicts can accept both the dependency and independency parts of themselves. They are able to appreciate how they are like and how they are different

from the primary object (or parent). These individuals have a consolidated self image while simultaneously maintaining an internalized consolidated image of the primary object. Levine and Saintonge (1993) support that healthy separation correlates consistently with "personalities characterized by sociability and self-confidence ... and negatively with the personalities associated with interpersonal discomfort and turbulence" (p. 503).

Lapsley, FitzGerald, Rice, and Jackson (1989) studied healthy separation as defined in the fourth subphase of separation-individuation and the use of two types of ideation, "the imaginary audience and the personal fable" (p. 484) from the social cognitive model. The former ideation "describes the adolescent's tendency to see the self as the object of others' attention, to anticipate the reaction of others to the self in real or imagined situations" (p. 484). And, the latter ideation "is the belief in one's personal uniqueness, omnipotence, and invulnerability" (p. 484).

Lapsley et al. (1989) hypothesize that these adolescent ideations, the imaginary audience and the personal fable, are meaningfully related to the separation-individuation process. Each serves a different function in the pursuit of healthy separation. The imaginary audience ideation involves thoughts or fantasies relating to the desire to hold on to the primary object with simultaneous anxiety and loss over perceived separation. The personal fable serves as a defense against the anxiety of the imaginary audience. Ideation in the personal fable denies the need for



dependency as well as the previously experienced anxiety. The latter permits the adolescent to establish definite ego boundaries as described by the psychoanalytic object-relations model and accounts for the "self-understanding" (p. 500) noted in the social cognitive model.

Results of the Lapsley et al. (1989) study supported a correlation between healthy separation as measured by the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence and imaginary audience and personal fable ideations. The imaginary audience related positively to the subphases of differentiation (symbiosis), practicing (enmeshment), and rapprochement (engulfment and separation anxiety). The personal fable related positively with the subphases of practicing (need denial and self-centeredness) and negatively with rapprochement (separation anxiety and engulfment). Age related patterns evidenced sixth graders lowest in healthy separation scores with an increase in scores going from early to late adolescence. And, sex differences were observed in that females had higher scores than males in healthy separation.

Rice, Cole, and Lapsley (1990) researched the relationship between adolescent separation-individuation, family cohesion, and college adjustment. Their results suggest that positive feelings about separation relate more to college adjustment than does independence from parents. One subscale from the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence, Separation Anxiety, was used along with other tests to measure separation-individuation.

According to Rice et al. (1990) measurements of psychological individuation appear to measure two distinct but related variables. One variable is

independence from parents; the other variable relates to positive feelings paired with the separation. As such, these two dimensions of separation-individuation are noted to relate in different ways to college adjustment. Simple independence from parents did not correlate with successful adjustment to college expectations. However, separation or independence that was accompanied with a positive affective response was noted to correlate with adjustment to the college environment. "Apparently, the successful management of the emotional responses to separation may be more important than independence, when confronted with the adaptational challenges of the college environment" (p. 201).

Rice (1992) expands on the previous 1990 study correlating separation-individuation and adjustment to college into a longitudinal study (two years). He proposed to look at change in separation-individuation from the freshman to the junior year, and to look at the correlation between psychological separation and adjustment over time. Psychological separation was measured by the Psychological Separation Inventory, a self-report questionnaire based on the psychoanalytic separation-individuation theory of ego development as proposed by Blos.

Results of the Rice (1992) study supported change over time in the form of positive increases in both adaptive psychological separation-individuation and in adjustment to college. Rice (1992) did not find gender specific change differences between men and women as did the Lapsley et al. (1989) study; Rice (1992) indicates that the contrasting findings "represent the influence of

sample size and power on significant differences" (p. 210). Positive increases were evidenced in function, emotional and conflictual independence but not in attitudinal independence from the parents. The latter was explained noting that the sample population was made up of students from a Catholic university with a history of conservative experiences.

According to Rice's (1992) study, level of separation-individuation did not correlate to academic adjustment in either the freshman or junior groups but separation-individuation did correlate significantly with freshmen female social adjustment and emotional adjustment. No significant association between separation-individuation and social adjustment or emotional adjustment was evidenced for freshmen males. In the junior year, separation-individuation was significantly associated with social adjustment and emotional adjustment in both women and men. Thus, Rice (1992) supports some gender-specific and age related separation-individuation correlation with adjustment however males and females did not differ significantly in the overall average separation-individuation from parents. Overall, Rice (1992) indicates that adjustment in college is correlated with separation-individuation, especially by the junior year.

### Critique

The Lapsley et al. (1989) study includes a more adequate age range than most studies by including 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade groups in the sample. Thus age

is better represented however the entire sample came from one middle class school. A more heterogeneous, socioeconomic sample would yield the possibility for better generalizability of results. The present study addresses a more heterogeneous socioeconomic sample population.

Rice et al. (1989) suggest that positive separation feelings are a better prediction of college adjustment than independence from parents. They also state that negative, angry, resentful feelings were not associated with positive college adjustment. This study could have been improved by using all of the subscales on the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence (SITA). Only one subscale was used. Results from the other SITA subscales could suggest possible fixation points or blocks in the separation-individuation process. As specific fixation points or blocks are isolated, there is greater opportunity for theory specific remediation counseling. The present research project attempts to address more specific fixation points by investigating all of the subphases of separation-individuation as addressed by the SITA.

Of the preceding studies investigating healthy adolescent separation-individuation, only two, Levine et al. (1986) and Lapsley et al. (1989) used populations comparable to the public high school. A third, Thompson and Patterson (1986), under represents the adolescent population. The remaining two, Rice et al. (1990), and Rice (1992), use only college students which over represents the higher age group. The sample population is not only at the extreme end of the separation-

individuation process, the sample is noticeably biased. These college students were from a small, private, religious college in the midwest, almost all lived on campus with the average distance from home being 600 miles, and most graduated in the top ten percent of their high school class. Studies of school adjustment and separation-individuation are needed that are not only representative of the entire adolescent age span but also that represent the typical population in the public high school.

### Chapter 3

#### COLLECTION OF DATA

##### Sample

The sample for this study was composed of two groups of 16, 17, and 18 year old high school students from a public high school in the Tidewater area of Virginia. The first group included students who had received three or more administrative disciplinary suspensions because of disruptive classroom behavior within the previous year and/or two suspensions within the first four months of the current school year (September-December). The second comparable group included students who had received no administrative disciplinary suspensions due to disruptive classroom behavior. All of the selected students were in regular education programs and had passed the sixth grade Virginia state Literacy Passport Tests. Successful completion of the Literacy Passport Tests was used as a standardized minimal cut off point to ensure a basic level of cognitive ability. Additionally, because of the possible confounding variables, previously identified students with subaverage intellectual potential, students with specific processing deficits, and students with serious emotional disorders were not included in the study.

The subjects were selected from a population that presents socioeconomic and cultural diversity which allows for a greater generalizability of findings. Socioeconomic information was attained through the free and reduced price lunch count. Qualifications for free

and reduced price lunches are determined by federal guide lines based on family income in connection with family size. Twenty-nine percent of the students from the selected high school population qualified for free or reduced price lunches. The cultural/racial diversity of the high school population included 42% white (680 students), 57% black (927 students), and 1% other including American Indian, Oriental, and Hispanic students (26).

#### Data Gathering

A total of 80 students (40+40) were initially identified through school records. Students' ages were 17 and 18 by September 1, of the current school year. Group I or the Target group was selected from the school's discipline records and yielded exactly 40 students who met the suspension criteria of three or more administrative suspensions within the previous year. Group II or the Control group was randomly selected from school records of students with no history of disciplinary action.

Letters were sent to parents and students via the United States Postal system with the details of the study and requests for voluntary participants. Arrangements were made for the students to stay after school to complete the student measure and to ride the school's activity bus home. Each letter contained a \$1.00 coupon to Wendy's Restaurants as a token appreciation for their time. Four of the letters were returned with postal

comment that the addressee was unknown. Response to the initial letter yielded two subjects from the Control group and no subjects from the Target group.

Permission was then sought and granted to work with the English teachers (total: 14) of these students in a second attempt to get student participation. A second letter of request was sent to the parents and was hand carried by the students. English teachers were given \$5.00 for each student for which they were able to achieve completed data of parent/student consent, student inventory (SITA), and classroom behavior rating (CBCL-TRF). Response to the attempt working through the English classes yielded 12 subjects from the Control group (one of which was incomplete and not usable) and 9 subjects from the Target group.

Feedback from the English teachers indicated that 19 of the 40 Target group had either withdrawn (moved or dropped out when they turned 18), transferred to alternative educational programs, or were chronically absent. Since the goal was to sample students with disruptive behavior within the public school setting, a further population and sample was drawn.

The second sample of 80 (40+40) included students who were 16, 17, or 18 years of age as of September 1, of the current school year and added students who had registered from the beginning of the school year. Group I, or the Target group, again was composed of students who had a history of three or more suspensions within the previous year, but also added students who had acquired two or more suspensions within the first four months (September - December) of the current school year. The



latter was necessary to include students who had enrolled following the pre-school (September 1) enrollment data based on last years population from which the initial population sample was taken. Group II (Control group), as previously defined, consisted of students who had no history of school suspensions and also added those age 16 by September 1, of the current school year and included those students enrolled following the beginning of the school year.

In the second populations (with 16 year-olds and new enrollees added) both students with significant discipline records and students with no discipline records, had numbers large enough to complete a randomized sample drawing of 40 target and 40 control subjects. In the previous sample population, while the Control group was selected by random drawing, the Target group contained a total of only 40 possibilities, of which 19 were later found to be no longer available within the public school setting.

The selected students and parents were then contacted through their science teachers (total: 7). Letters of request were hand carried by the students. Teachers were again given \$5.00 for each student for which they were able to achieve completed data of parent/student consent, student inventory (SITA), and classroom behavior rating (CBCL-TRF). This attempt yielded a response of 31 completed packets, 14 control and 17 target students. Thus, the total number of responses to the study was 54 with 28 control subjects and 26 target subjects.

The Target group of 26 consisted of 13 males and 13

females. Eight were white, 16 were black, one was Oriental, and one was American Indian. Grade levels included three from grade 9, 11 from grade 10, three from grade 11, and nine from grade 12. There were nine 16-year-olds, 15 17-year-olds, and four 18-year-olds. Of the Target group 10 were indicated to be living with both mother and father, 12 lived with a mother, 1 lived with a father, and 3 lived with a legal guardian or "other." Nine of the 26 received free or reduced price lunches.

Rule violations resulting in suspensions of the target participating population included possession of weapons/knife, possession of communication devices, theft and possession of stolen property, fighting with exchange of physical contact between students, threatening other students, disruption/other, leaving without permission, horseplaying, disruptive chronic talking, refusal to participate in in-school alternatives, insubordination/failure to comply with a staff member, disrespect, cheating, misrepresentation/false information, food and beverages in class, cutting school, cutting class, and habitual tardiness. Of note is the fact that those students with the most severe violations were no longer in the regular public high school classroom and therefore were not included in the study due to long term suspensions or to alternative educational placements.

The Control group of 28 consisted of 18 males and 10 females. Sixteen were white and 12 were black. Grade levels were four-tenth graders, 13-eleventh graders, and 11-twelfth graders. There were eight 16-year-olds, 17 17-year-olds, and three 18-year-olds. In the Control

group, 15 were indicated to be living with both mother and father, 10 lived with a mother, and three lived with a legal guardian or "other." Three of the 28 received free or reduced price lunches.

Subjects were assured that all data would be kept confidential and that their identities would remain anonymous. Participants were assured that no individually identifying data would be used and that only group means would be included in the results. Once the data collection was completed and scores tallied, subjects were assigned a number by order of response. Scores were then transferred by number to a tally sheet and then all identifying data, individual response sheets, and the identifying number key were destroyed. To protect privacy and confidentiality of the subjects, no identifying data or tracer remained.

### Instrumentation

This study utilized the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence and the Achenbach Child Behavior Check List - Teacher Report Form. Each measure is described and followed by an examination of the validity and reliability of the instrument.

#### **Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence:**

The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence is a self-report inventory that poses a series of 103 attitudinal statements about relationships with parents,

teachers, and peers. Answers are selected from a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree or is always true for me" to "strongly disagree or is never true for me." The results are profiled on nine subscales that are conceptually linked to the key dynamics of Mahler's separation-individuation model and to specific fixation points for psychopathology or to milestones signifying healthy development. (Levine et al., 1986; Levine & Saintonge, 1993) The nine subscales include

1. Separation Anxiety, 2. Engulfment Anxiety,
3. Nurturance Seeking, 4. Peer Enmeshment, 5. Teacher Enmeshment, 6. Practicing-Mirroring, 7. Need Denial,
8. Rejection Expectancy, and 9. Healthy Separation.

The first subscale, Separation Anxiety, deals with significant others experienced as abandoning either emotionally or physically. Feelings associated with actual, anticipated or perceived separation include rejection, abandonment, desertion, anxiety or depression. Levine et al. (1986) state that this is "thought to represent residual effects of the intense separation anxiety felt by the toddler during rapprochement, which is reexperienced by the separating adolescent" (p. 125). Levine et al. (1986) add that "it is also seen in children who broke from the symbiotic tie to their mother prematurely and in children whose mothers were for various reasons less than optimally available" (p. 125).

The second subscale, Engulfment Anxiety, involves intimacy experienced as envelopment. These individuals are described as fearful of close interpersonal relationships which they perceive as threatening to their independence or selfhood. They feel controlled by people

whom they view as overpowering their autonomy. Levine et al. (1986) note that this scale is "hypothesized to measure residual effects of the reengulfment fear felt by the toddler during rapprochement that is reexperienced during adolescence" (p. 125). Fear of reengulfment may also stem from excessive intrusiveness during the early symbiotic phase.

Nurturance Seeking, the third subscale, describes individuals with strong caretaker needs or attachment. They anticipate gratification of their dependency needs and have positive feelings with this anticipation. Their relationships are often intimate, and enmeshed with underlying feelings of merging or being in a state of oneness with the other person. This state of merging or fusing is believed to be residual effects of the symbiotic phase as it continues to affect adolescents. (Levine et al., 1986)

The fourth subscale, Peer Enmeshment, and the fifth subscale, Teacher Enmeshment, describe strivings for intense peer intimacy and strivings for intense intimate attachments to teachers, respectively. These scales are believed to reflect a concern for self-object boundary diffusion. (Levine et al., 1986; Lapsley et al., 1989)

The sixth subscale, Practicing-Mirroring, describes narcissistic strivings and self-centeredness. These feelings are often simultaneously reinforced by other people's feedback or mirroring in which there is an overvaluation of oneself with excessive attention or praise. Levine et al. (1986) hypothesize the Practicing-Mirroring subscale "to assess residual effects of the practicing phase of separation-individuation, as well as

the attainment of narcissistic reserves during earlier phases of separation-individuation" (p. 126).

The seventh subscale, Need Denial, assesses denial or avoidance of attachment needs by individuals rejecting to understand feelings of love, closeness, or friendship. This denial is thought to be defensive against the anxiety associated with separation. This defensive style is believed to have begun during the early infant phase of separation and continues into the second phase of adolescence. This need denial is believed to relate to mechanical, unpredictable and/or parasitic, impinging caretaker interactions during the symbiotic phase. (Levine et al., 1986)

The eighth subscale, Rejection Expectancy, describes emotional callousness and indifference to significant others. This subscale has recently been added to the scales and is derived theoretically from Kernberg's (1975) work with parental characteristics of callousness and spiteful aggression. Rejection expectancy is thought to stem from the early separation phase and the practicing phase. (Levine & Saintonge, 1993) Subscale eight, Rejection Expectancy, was not used in the present study, since its theoretical base came from Kernberg's work and was not necessarily related to Mahler's substages of separation-individuation.

The last subscale, Healthy Separation, assesses a flexible balance of dependence and independence strivings. These individuals have sufficiently resolved the conflicts of the first two phases of autism and symbiosis, and the three subphases of separation-individuation. This last subscale represents individuals

who have progressed successfully through a consolidation of self and object both during childhood and during adolescence.

In its initial form, the SITA with its theoretical basis, was psychometrically constructed using Loevinger's three stage validation model of test construction with a non clinical population. In the first step, theoretical-substantive validation was pursued using a systematic rating to determine the theoretical match between test items and the related scale dimension. In the second step, internal-structural validation was evaluated using factor analysis and point biserial correlations addressing statistical cohesion of each item with its intended scale. In the initial form, each subscale was reported to possess moderate to strong internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .70$ ). Third, external-criterion validation was demonstrated using an analysis of variance which supported a meaningful correspondence of the SITA scale scores to another measure of adolescent personality dimensions, the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory. (Levine et al., 1986; Levine & Saintonge, 1993)

Levine and Saintonge (1993) address the psychometric properties of the current form of the SITA in the 1993 study using a clinical population. Results were reported to be comparable to those reported earlier for the non-clinical population. Strong to moderate internal-structural validity was reported for Practicing-Mirroring, Engulfment Anxiety, Dependency Denial, Nurturance Seeking, Teacher Enmeshment, and Rejection Expectancy (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  .85, .75, .74, .74, .79, and

.79 respectively). Less strong internal structural validity was reported for Separation Anxiety, Peer Enmeshment, and Healthy Separation (Cronbach's alpha .68, .74, and .64 respectively).

Concurrent validity for the updated SITA subscales was indirectly supported by comparing personality correlates of the SITA with the Millon Adolescent Personality Inventory. A great deal of consistency is reported for both the clinical and non-clinical populations. Each correlation obtained supported the theoretical basis of the SITA subscales. (Levine and Saintonge, 1993)

Fishler, Sperling, and Carr (1990) in a review of assessment techniques measuring adult behavior and relatedness, state that the SITA is "compelling theoretically and apparently structurally valid," however they add that "criterion validity remains to be further investigated" (p. 509). The SITA has been used in recent studies which have related it to college adjustment, ego identity status, adolescent sexual self disclosure, and family marital status.

#### Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form

The Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form (1991) is a behavior rating scale of 113 items that yields a multidimensional profile of empirically derived behavioral deviancy for children ages 4 to 18 years. A three point scale of 0, 1, or 2 is used to indicate that the behavior is not true, is somewhat or sometimes true, or is very true or often true,



consecutively. The profile yields eight subscales: Withdrawal, Somatic Complaints, Anxious-depressed, Social Problems, Thought Problems, Attention Problems, Delinquent Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior. The first two subscales relate to internalizing core syndromes and the last two relate to externalizing core syndromes.

The Achenbach TRF Manual addresses both reliability and validity. Test-retest reliability was reported high with a mean correlation of .92 for the problem scores. Stability over a four month period was reported as good. Interrater agreement was similar for different teachers as well as teacher aides. The manual further adds that "content validity is supported by the ability of most TRF items to discriminate significantly between demographically matched referred and non referred pupils," and "criterion-related validity is supported by ability of the TRF's quantitative scale scores to discriminate between referred and non referred pupils with demographic effects partialled out" (Achenbach, 1991, p. 88).

Sattler (1992) supports the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Form as a useful instrument to evaluate behavior problems of children. Norms include children ages 4 to 18 and are divided by age (4-11 and 12-18) and by sex. T-scores provide standardized scoring. Sattler states that, "the Teacher's Report Form is well standardized and has adequate reliability and validity" (p. 393).

According to Christenson's (1992) review in The Eleventh Mental Measurements Yearbook, the CBCL-TRF provides "standardized descriptions of behavior rather

than diagnostic inferences" (p. 165). Christenson states that strong, sound evidence is given for both three forms of reliability and three forms of validity. Evidence for criterion-related validity is especially strong in the use of referral for professional help as a criterion. The behavior problem scales and item scores are empirically derived. In addition, Christenson states that, "the norming procedures are impeccable" (p. 165).

Elliott and Busse (1992) in The Eleventh Mental Measurements Yearbook state that, "the authors of the TRF have demonstrated a sound knowledge of psychometric issues and techniques in constructing this rating scale" (p. 167). Scale test-retest reliabilites were .89 for a two week period, test stability was .74 for two months and .68 for four months and interrater reliability was .57. No internal consistency data is given however because of the explicit factor analytic data, scale reliability is assumed to be high and technically unnecessary.

According to Elliott and Busse's (1992) review, the primary validity for the TRF is the result of a concurrent validity study and analytic work of the Conners Revised Teacher Rating Scale. The total problem scores on the TRF and the Conners scale yielded a Pearson correlation of .85. Additionally, the TRF subscales of Aggression, Nervous-Overactive, and Inattentive yielded good convergent validity with the Conner's subscales of Conduct Disorder, Hyperactivity, and Inattentive-Passive, respectively.

Elliott and Busse (1992) suggest that the classification accuracy of the TRF is considered

adequate. A discriminate analysis misclassified only 28% of the sample with false-positives and false-negatives equally distributed, which is considered acceptable for the purpose of description.

Although Elliott and Busse (1992) consider the TRF to be useful in the behavioral assessment of school-aged children, they add however, that while the standardization sample was adequate in numbers, "it was unrepresentative of the U.S. population with regard to racial status and regional representation" (p. 167). They also consider the hand scoring system to be rather complicated and to lack time efficiency. The scorer is required to transfer scores from the TRF to a profile sheet, tally, and graph the totals. In conclusion, while Elliott and Busse do not think that the CBCL-TRF is "as user friendly as some of its competition" (p. 168), they state that "the TRF offers one a reasonable instrument for documenting the problem behaviors of school-age children" (p. 167).

### Research Design

The design of this study was causal-comparative. Borg and Gall (1989) state that the causal-comparative method is aimed at the possible causes and effects of a behavior pattern by comparing subjects in whom this pattern is present with similar subjects in which it is absent. They note "the major advantage of causal-comparative research designs is that they allow us to study cause-and-effect relationships under conditions

where experimental manipulation is difficult or impossible" (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 539). In this study, the proposed causes relating to early separation-individuation processes are studied after the fact, or after they presumably have exerted their influence on adolescent behavioral coping patterns.

Borg and Gall (1989) state that another advantage of the causal-comparative method is that many relationships can be studied in a single research project. In the case of the present study, the author examined four variables within the separation-individuation process: symbiosis/differentiation, practicing, rapprochement, and libidinal object constancy.

### Specific Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were explored in this study.

1. There will be no significant difference in social/emotional adaptive behavior between adolescents with no history of disciplinary suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Form, Social Problems subscale, Delinquent Behavior subscale, and Aggressive Behavior subscale.

2. There will be no significant difference in the psychological development of separation-individuation between adolescents with no history of disciplinary

suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by any of the eight selected subscales on the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence.

### Data Analysis

Borg and Gall (1989) state that "the first step in an analysis of causal-comparative data is to compute descriptive statistics for each comparison group in the study" (p. 546). For the purpose of the current study, the analysis included the group means and standard deviations.

The next step was to complete a test of significance to determine level of statistical significance of the observed differences between the sample means. An independent t-test for equality of means was used to compare the subscale means of Group I and Group II when the variances were determined to be equal, and an adjusted t-test was used when the variances were determined as unequal. Equality of the variances was determined by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.

### Ethical Considerations

The proposed study was conducted in such a manner as to protect the rights and privacy of the student participants. Informed consent was obtained from parents and subjects. Subjects were made aware that they could

refuse to participate, or that they had the right to withdraw at any time. Participants were told that the purpose of the research was to measure levels of adolescent development and classroom behavior.

Assurance of confidentiality was given. Names were used only to collect the initial data. As soon as the initial data was collected and transferred to a profile sheet, all names were destroyed and replaced by assigned student identification numbers leaving no traceable code back to individual student identification. Only group means were used in the analysis and discussion with no identifiable individual information.

The results of the study will be made available to all interested participants, to the participating school system, and the participating high school. The study was approved by the Research Department of the participating school system, the participating high school principal, and the Human Subjects Committee of the College of William and Mary.

## Chapter Four

### RESULTS

The results of each of the two principal research questions are presented in this chapter. The existence of two behaviorally distinct groups is tested by means of the first hypothesis, and the existence of two differential psychologically developing groups is tested by means of the second hypotheses.

#### Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in social/emotional adaptive behavior between adolescents with no history of disciplinary suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by the Achenbach CBCL-TRF in Social Problems, Delinquent Behavior, and Aggressive Behavior.

The focus of the research in Hypothesis One deals with the observable behaviors of the students within the classroom setting. These are behaviors that are observed, then rated from the perception of an external other, the supervising adult, or teacher.

The t-test procedure and the adjusted t-test procedure were conducted utilizing as a measure the Z-score ratings from the CBCL-TRF.

Means and standard deviations of the measures of interest are reported in Appendix C for all subscales and instruments.

**Social Problems Subscale:** $t(52) = -.93, p.>.05$  (equal variances)**Delinquent Behavior Subscale:** $t(29.82) = -2.63, p.<.05$  (unequal variances)**Aggressive Behavior Subscale:** $t(32.70) = -3.24, p.<.05$  (unequal variances)

Hypothesis One is rejected at the 0.05 level as there were two of the three selected subscales on the CBCL-TRF which evidenced a statistically significant difference between the group mean of students with suspensions and the group mean of the controls.

**Hypothesis Two**

There is no significant difference in the psychological development of separation-individuation between adolescents with no history of disciplinary suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by any of eight selected subscales on the SITA.

The focus of the research now transfers to an examination of psychological developmental substages, having found some distinctive behavioral differences between the Target group and the Control group. The t-test procedure was again carried out using as a measure the achieved scores (student perception/self report) from the eight selected subscales.



**Separation Anxiety:** $t(52) = .30, p > .05$  (equal variances)**Engulfment Anxiety:** $t(52) = -.45, p > .05$  (equal variances)**Nurturance Seeking:** $t(40.45) = -1.68, p > .05$  (unequal variances)**Peer Enmeshment:** $t(52) = .40, p > .05$  (equal variances)**Teacher Enmeshment:** $t(52) = .74, p > .05$  (equal variances)**Practicing Mirroring:** $t(52) = -.63, p > .05$  (equal variances)**Need Denial:** $t(52) = -2.19, p < .05$  (equal variances)**Healthy Separation:** $t(52) = -.30, p > .05$  (equal variances)

Seven of the eight subscales evidenced no statistically significant difference between the group mean of the students with a history of suspensions and the group mean of the students with no history of suspensions. The one major exception to the lack of significant results was found on the subscale of Need Denial.

Hypothesis Two is rejected at the 0.05 level as there was a significant difference on one of the eight SITA subscales.

While the preceding results are tentative, it is felt that the direction of the inquiry is logical and it is worthy of further pursuit. The highly significant differences displayed on the two subscales of classroom behavior indicate tendencies toward either adaptive or maladaptive behavior (with anger turned outward) within the academic setting. The second area of significance is noted on one of the subscales of psychological development in separation-individuation. Implications of these occurrences, as determined by level of significance at the 0.05 level, will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter five includes a summary of this research study and interpretations of the results according to the hypotheses. Possible limitations which may have influenced the results are also discussed. Conclusions are presented in relation to the interpretations of the results. Lastly, implications for further research are discussed and future research is suggested.

#### Summary

The increasing number of students with disruptive behaviors in the public school classroom has become an area of critical concern for educators. The development of intervention strategies could possibly be enhanced by the identification of specific roadblocks to the psychological development of adaptive behavior. If these students are unique, then remediation strategies can be developed, administered, and monitored. Students who are frequently suspended may be representative of such a group with patterns of psychological growth that are clinically different from other students.

The majority of research relating to behavior and psychological development, as defined by Mahler and Blos in separation-individuation, has been done with either younger or older than high school students or with clinical populations. The research in Chapter Two supports evidence that blocks in any of the subphases of

differentiation, practicing, or rapproachment, have been correlated with less than adaptive social/emotional behavior which often interferes with the learning process in the classroom. In certain case studies, good outcomes were evidenced when these issues were addressed in counseling.

The major research question asked in the present study was if the students with multiple suspensions were different from students without suspensions, in the developmental process of separation-individuation. A public high school in the Tidewater area of Virginia was selected for the study. The target population was identified through the school's discipline records, and the control group was randomly selected from the regular education population. Collection of data, both student and teacher, was completed either through the student's English or science class.

The analysis of the information included use of an independent t-test when the variances of the groups were equal, and an adjusted t-test when the variances were unequal, to determine if the group means were significantly different.

### Conclusions, Interpretations, and Limitations

In this section, interpretations of the results in addition to conclusions that can be drawn from the results will be discussed for each hypothesis tested. Limitations will also be noted.

### Hypothesis One

Hypothesis number one states that:

There will be no significant difference in social/emotional adaptive behavior between adolescents with no history of disciplinary suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by the Achenbach Child Behavior Checklist - Teacher Report Form, Social Problems subscale, Delinquent Behavior subscale, and Aggressive Behavior subscale.

This overall hypothesis dealt with the idea that students with multiple suspensions would have less adaptive behaviors than the controls as perceived by teachers. Two of the three areas showed a significant difference between the groups: Delinquent Behavior and Aggressive Behavior. The two groups were not significantly different on the Social Problems subscale. Thus, Hypothesis One could only be rejected in part.

#### Part One: Social Problems

It was felt that the Target group would exhibit more social problems than that exhibited by the Control group. The mean for the Target group was not however, significantly different from the mean of the Control group therefore the part of Hypothesis One dealing with Social Problems could not be rejected. The CBCL-TRF was unable to show any difference between the two groups in overt social skills.

Not only was the Social Problems subscale unable to show any difference between the two groups in level of

social skills development, the scores of both groups were well within a range considered to be adaptive when compared to the measure's norming sample. Indications are that both types of students, frequently suspended and not suspended, who have made it successfully to the later years of high school in a mainstreamed track, have been able to adequately build and maintain social relationships. This measure would not appear useful in identifying specific goals for counseling often suspended students. Other variables are therefore considered to account for the behaviors resulting in suspensions.

#### Part Two: Delinquent Behavior

This area of the hypothesis dealt with the concept that suspended students would have less regard for societal norms and expectations than the controls. The group mean score for the Control group was 50.21, while the suspended group had a mean score of 51.27. The mean for the suspended group was significantly different from the mean of the Control group, therefore the null hypothesis relating to delinquent like behavior is rejected and the groups are considered truly different. The direction of the scores with the mean of the Target group higher than the mean of the Control group, lends support to the Achenbach theoretical rationale that students with limited regard for societal norms result in maladaptive behaviors which in the current study also correlates with a tendency to multiple suspensions. The Delinquent Subscale would be considered valid in distinguishing which students to target for counseling intervention when a public school is seeking to reduce

number of suspensions.

### Part Three: Aggressive Behavior

This part of Hypothesis One explores the difference between levels of anger turned outward in the suspended Target group and the Control group. The mean score for the Control group was 50.96, while the more frequently suspended Target group had a mean score of 54.85. The mean for the suspended group was significantly different and higher than the mean of the Control group. Part three of Hypothesis One is therefore rejected and the groups are considered different in the degree to which they externalize their feelings of anger.

Implications of the direction of these group scores and the significant difference between them supports the initial premise that the Aggressive Behavior subscale, as well as the Delinquent Behavior subscale, would be useful in identifying high school students most at risk for multiple suspensions. The target students showed higher levels of anger and had more difficulty controlling their anger. Both the Aggressive Behavior and Delinquent Behavior subscales are however limited, by the results of this study, to identification only. These results would not support a topic or specific direction for the counseling intervention. The second measure, the SITA, was given to isolate possible counseling topics or strategies which will be discussed later.

In summary, the results from the 3 subscales on the CBCL-TRF, yielded only partial significance relating to being able to identify or define differences in students with and without a history of suspensions. Differences

in overt behavior were significant in delinquency and aggression, yet were not in development of social skills. Of interest was the fact that although two scales did show a significant difference in comparative level of scores, neither of the groups had scores elevated within the clinical range of maladaptive adjustment. Although the means for the groups were significantly different, the behavior of both groups was still within what is considered to be adaptive within the classroom setting. Thus students who have achieved a mid to late high school status successfully are still within what Achenbach would theorize to be insignificant in overall adjustment. Caution should then be used when considering the CBCL-TRF to identify maladaptive behavior--as defined by Achenbach (less than 2% of the population) yet it can be used, as this study supports, to identify those students most at risk for multiple suspensions.

Although the current study found significant differences in two areas, the third area of social problems was not significant. Possible reasons for the lack of significance in one area may relate to a difference in the two populations. The 2% of the population which the Achenbach attempts to measure as within the critical range, would not parallel the Target population in the current study. The sample in the current study consisted of students who were adaptive enough to have achieved 10 to 12 years of school and to have mastered academic skills consistent to the state literacy requirements; they were not "disabled," just often suspended. The clinical sample of the CBCL-TRF was considered to be impaired in functioning. The author of



the CBCL-TRF states that the intent of the scale is to measure adaptive versus maladaptive.

A second possible reason for significance in part, may relate to the type of skills measured. Development of social skills and/or the ability to build and maintain relationships may be more critical to survival than is a respect for societal norms or control in the way in which anger is manifested. Future studies are merited which explore whether there are critical skills needed for survival and other skills which might only influence the degree of impairment within that survival.

A further limitation relating to sample characteristics involved the difficulty reaching those most characteristic of the Target group. Many of those on the attendance rolls at the time of the sample selection were no longer available when the actual collecting of data was commenced. Because of continued disruptive behavior, some had either been sent to alternative educational programs or were on long term suspensions. Some had withdrawn because they had turned eighteen in the intervening time, and some had withdrawn for unspecified reasons. Additionally, many of the Target group were also chronic absentee problems and were therefore unavailable. Only those with less severe problems and those willing to participate actually became part of the sample and as such may have diluted the characteristics. Thus, the target sample actually achieved may not have represented the most characteristic disruptive student and consequently may have limited the significance of the results.

### Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis Two states:

There will be no significant difference in the psychological development of separation-individuation between adolescents with no history of disciplinary suspensions and adolescents with a history of disciplinary suspensions as measured by any of the eight selected subscales on the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence.

As previously discussed, the current study determined the three subscales from the CBCL-TRF to be at least partially useful and valid in distinguishing students whose behaviors placed them more at risk for multiple suspensions. The SITA was included in the study as an effort to determine if the targeted students differed from the controls in specific areas of blocked psychological development and if so would these areas of fixation suggest specific targets for later counseling therapy.

The students were administered the SITA to see if they differed in proposed psychological development as measured by self report of feelings and attitudes. Only one area, Need Denial, showed a significant difference between the two groups. Hypothesis Two would therefore fail to be rejected for seven of the eight subscales. Various limitations, relating to the sample in this study, would appear to have influenced the results of the present endeavor. The overall value of the SITA as a measure to determine levels of psychological growth

within the general population is yet to be determined by future studies.

Two noted areas relating to the current sample appear to have possibly influenced the direction of the results: a weakened sample and diversity of behaviors resulting in suspensions. As mentioned earlier, the students most descriptive of the multiply suspended population were a transitory group and difficult to acquire for this study. Many from the sample selection dropped out, moved, were transferred to alternative educational programs, had unusually high absentee rates, or simply chose not to participate. All of these factors influenced and as such weakened the characteristics of the actual achieved responding sample for the study. Future studies would want to explore alternative avenues to reaching a more characteristic sample.

A further variable influencing sample selection in the current study relates to the diversity of behaviors for which the students were suspended. The current study included a range from cutting class to possession of a weapon. This range was too inclusive; future studies should limit and define disruptive behavior more narrowly. As such, only those with the most significant disruptive behaviors would be included.

The results of each SITA subscale, in relation to the achieved sample, will be discussed individually. The overall instrument attempts to evaluate the four subphases of separation-individuation: differentiation (Nurturance Seeking, Peer Enmeshment, and Teacher Enmeshment Subscales), practicing (Practicing Mirroring, and Need Denial Subscales), Rapproachment (Separation

Anxiety, and Engulfment Anxiety Subscales), and libidinal object constancy (Healthy Separation).

#### Part One: Separation Anxiety

This part of Hypothesis Two dealt with the idea that mid adolescent development, during the rapproachment phase, involves a dual need for both dependency and independency yet here significant others may be experienced as abandoning. Earlier studies, such as the clinical case studies by Esman and by Brandt and Silverman supported significant levels of anxiety in their more extreme cases. Other group studies by Wade, and by Thompson and Patterson, also found a correlation between levels of separation anxiety and adaptive behavior in a general sample of younger adolescents. It was therefore felt that the older suspended group in the high school population would also show more anxiety. The current analysis, however, showed that the two groups were not significantly different on the variable of separation anxiety. This part of Hypothesis Two failed to be rejected.

#### Part Two: Engulfment Anxiety

Engulfment anxiety according to Levine et al. (1986), is also experienced as relating to the rapproachment subphase, only in this case, the pathology goes in the opposite direction. Intimacy is experienced as envelopment and close relationships are feared. Since Thompson and Patterson (1986) described these teens with symptoms of low frustration tolerance, forgetfulness, dawdling, and generally failing to meet the adults'

expectations, it was felt that this scale would display a difference between the frequently suspended and the not suspended. This subscale did not, however, distinguish between the two samples in the current study and therefore this part of the Hypothesis could not be rejected. Possible explanations for failure to find significant differences again point to a possible sample that was so limited in degree of disruptive behavior, and so diverse as to no longer represent the true characteristic of the frequently suspended student population.

### Part Three: Nurturance Seeking

The Nurturance seeking subscale is hypothesized by the test authors to measure levels of fixations or blocks in the differentiation process resulting in a pathological need for a strong caretaker or distorted attachment needs. Hofer's (1989) study of inmates correlated fixation at differentiation with split-off feelings of anger toward the caretakers resulting in anti-social manipulation. Although Hofer's subjects evidenced extremes of behavior, part of the suspended students had evidenced significant anti-social manipulative behaviors in the possession of weapons, fighting and disregard for rules and authority, and were considered by this writer to have the potential to later become possible inmates if the direction of their lives continued.

This study did not, however, find a significant difference between the frequently suspended students and the non suspended students on levels of psychological

development as measured by the Nurturance Seeking subscale. The lack of the test's ability to discriminate may again point toward the sample rather than to the theory as such. Depressed opportunity to reach the most significant type of disruptive student, may as a result have weakened the actual achieved sample.

#### Parts Four and Five: Peer Enmeshment and Teacher Enmeshment

Enmeshment, whether peer or teacher, is also hypothesized by the test authors to relate back to the differentiation subphase. Both subscales hope to evaluate strivings for intense intimacy and are believed to reflect a concern for self-object boundary diffusion. Neither of the measures were able to show any differences between the two groups in the current study. Goodrich's study (1985) was able to differentiate between highly disturbed adolescents in a residential setting. The lack of significant results in the present study may relate to the level of maladjustment of the adolescent. In the present study, the students were still able to maintain within the mainstreamed public school; in Goodrich's cases, the students were in far more restrictive settings due to inability to function within the mainstream. As such, levels of enmeshment, whether peer or teacher, as measured by the SITA, do not appear to be useful in distinguishing between the often suspended students and the non suspended students. Indications are that these students, who have been able to maintain themselves within the regular education setting, also have developed

adequate separation-individuation: differentiation to be considered adaptive.

#### Part Six: Practicing Mirroring

This subscale measures development as the teen explores non-parent space yet uses the family as a reference point to attain reinforcement of his behaviors. Since this is theorized to be observed as teen rebellion and experimentation, it was expected that frequently suspended students would evidence less development in this area than their control peers. Analysis of the group means failed to yield significant differences, however. This hypothesis failed to be rejected.

While other studies have been able to detect significant differences at this stage of separation-individuation, the current study did not. Thompson and Patterson's (1986) study found significant distinguishing factors on issues of control and need for immediate gratification, however most of their sample consisted of younger students than the current study. This age difference could account for the lack of results in the present study. Furthermore, the Abrams and Goldman (1976) research used case studies from their clinical practice. More severe pathology is expected in the clinical setting.

Again the lack of results appears to point to the extremeness of the sample in previous studies. The students who have maintained themselves within the mainstream to make it 10 to 12 years, have evidently mastered enough psychological development so as to not test significant on the SITA: Practicing Mirroring

subscale.

#### Part Seven: Need Denial

This subscale assesses denial of attachment needs by individuals during the latter part of the practicing subphase of separation-individuation. The mean score for the Control group was 21.44, while the suspended group had a mean score of 24.68. The mean for the suspended group was significantly different,  $t(52) = -2.19$ ,  $p < .05$ , from the mean of the Control group. The null hypothesis, as relating to need denial, is therefore rejected. The fact that the mean for the suspended Target group was higher than the mean for the Control group lends support to the theoretical rationale that teens with blocked psychological development at this specific stage will deny or avoid attachment needs. They experience difficulty understanding feelings of love, closeness, or friendship. This denial is thought to be defensive against the anxiety associated with separation and is believed to relate to mechanical, unpredictable family interactions.

Need Denial was the only one of eight of the SITA subscales to show a significant difference in the public high school sample between frequently suspended and not suspended students. The question is raised, if the mainstreamed high school sample was not severe enough to show differences in the other areas, how is this area divergent so that a difference was found. The author of this study surmises that the construct measured in Need Denial may somehow relate to the earlier mentioned



significant different levels of aggression (anger turned outward) and delinquency (disregard for societal expectations) on the CBCL-TRF. The psychological concept measured by the Need Denial subscale, of denying a need for relationships which is a defense mechanism against feared rejection and perceived lack of support, could possibly relate to behaviors measured on the aggression and delinquent subscales of the CBCL-TRF.

Although this study gives only limited support for differences in the public school population in the psychological development of separation-individuation (need denial) and the behaviors of aggression and delinquency, it is felt to be a valid direction and to merit further investigation. Additional studies would benefit from using a more finely tuned measure than the SITA with an emphasis on the constructs tapped in the Need Denial subscale. And, although there was a significant difference in the present samples, the limited results from the overall SITA would render it a less than adequate, or possibly premature measure, to use in the identification of counseling goals to be used with the frequently suspended students.

#### Part Eight: Healthy Separation

It was felt that the Target group of suspended students would evidence lower scores than the Control group, however, the analysis of healthy separation showed that the two were not significantly different. This hypothesis failed to be rejected.

Possible explanations for the lack of differences in the mainstream high school sample point to various

factors. Both groups in the present study had achieved a degree of psychological growth in that they had made it 10 to 12 years in the academic setting, although some had experienced more difficulty than others. Both groups also scored as having achieved adequate acquisition of social skills as measured by the CBCL-TRF.

Of additional interest is the fact that neither of the groups scored within the clinically significant range (2% of the population) on either of the other two CBCL-TRF subscales indicating similar results as the SITA Healthy Separation subscale. Earlier studies such as Thompson and Patterson used a more clinical sample to find significant levels of difference. And, other studies like Lapsley et al. (1989) and Rice et al. (1990) used college age students to find a level of significance. The Healthy Separation score on the SITA, which has the least strong internal structural validity of all the subscales (.64), would not be the instrument of choice to use in the regular education high school population to isolate possible target areas for counseling remediation of frequently suspended students.

In conclusion, while other studies relating to the subphases of separation-individuation have found significant factors relating to psychological growth in adolescents, these earlier studies used samples of younger or older students and samples with more extreme behaviors. The current study, with the mainstreamed public high school sample, found only limited evidence of differences in the psychological growth of non suspended students and often suspended students.

Factors considered to impact on the limited results

of the current study are a sample of students with limited disruptive characteristics, a diverse behavioral sample in reasons for suspension, and a less extreme sample. Only one variable showed support for the theoretical basis of the study. Frequently suspended students did show higher levels of need denial.

Since the nature of this work was exploratory, it is felt that further research is merited within the mainstream high school population relating to the subphases of separation-individuation. Future investigations would benefit by using a narrower definition of disruptive classroom behavior and by pursuing more effective methods to attain the participation of the most characteristic suspended student just prior to their exit from the mainstream classroom.

An additional variable relating to the present study not finding support for the stated constructs, may relate to the theoretical base of the study. A psychoanalytic theory was used as the theoretical foundation. The psychoanalytic orientation is non statistical in nature and considers the use of projectives to be a more valid measure of psychological development. Levine's inventory, the SITA, which is statistical in nature, is therefore to be considered a pioneer attempt to cross the theoretical boundaries and use a statistical instrument to measure a psychodynamic construct. This crossing of theoretical boundaries allows for some uncertainty. Further validation studies are needed to determine whether the inventory actually taps the constructs it purports to measure. Levine's inventory may be the best

available, yet further validation studies are warranted to determine whether it accurately measures or reflects the proposed psychodynamic constructs.

### Recommendations

In light of the results of the present study and the limitations noted, the following implications are offered to further researchers:

1. Future research should consider working with the administrative staff to collect student self-report measures, such as the SITA, on the day of a student's third suspension, prior to the student's exit of the school building. This would allow for a more characteristic sampling of students with disruptive behavior.

2. A more sensitive measure of psychological development may identify specific areas of blocking and thus assist in specific therapeutic remediation strategies.

3. Future investigations may wish to use an additional variable with individual intelligence tests. Would level of intelligence relate to rate and type of psychological growth. Does there have to be a certain level of cognitive maturity prior to resolution of the separation-individuation development?

4. Research targeted at the early adolescent stage, of students within the public school setting and not hospital or residential settings, should be considered. Possible identification at thirteen or fourteen would

allow for specific preventive intervention strategies adaptable to the public school setting.

5. In order to maximize student participation in a further study, the researcher should seek to work through some school staff member with whom the students are already familiar and who has earned the respect of the students and a right of authority. This foundation holds a greater potential for encouraging student participation than does a contact and request from an unfamiliar researcher.

6. Future researchers might wish to divide the target population by suspension offense category to see if there were any significant differences and if there were any interactional effects.

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**APPENDIX A**

**LETTERS, PERMISSIONS FORMS,  
AND ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS**

### CONSENT FORM: Teachers

The purpose of this form is to request your voluntary participation in a study, and to insure that you understand the purposes of the study. Please read the following information carefully, then sign your name in the section marked, "Informed and Voluntary Consent to Participate," if you are willing to cooperate in the study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate level of psychological development in older high school students as it relates to adaptive classroom behavior.

Participants will be asked to complete one check list describing the behaviors of a high school student. Completion time will take about 15 minutes, and will be arranged at a time and a location convenient to the participant.

All data collected in the study will be kept in confidence. Participants will be assigned numbers for research analysis purposes. All personal identifying information will be destroyed upon completion of data collection and only group student means will be used for the study. No data will be used for any purpose except that expressly specified in this study.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate, or to withdraw in part or in whole at any time.

A written summary of the results of this study will be available upon request from:

Eunice E. Lockwood, Researcher  
284 Colony Road  
Newport News, Virginia 23602

or  
Dr. Roger R. Ries, Dissertation Chair  
School of Education  
College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

Either of the named individuals is available to speak with you, if any questions, comments or concerns about the study arise.

If any distress is caused by the tests or the summary, the researcher and or sponsor will assist the participant to establish contact with an appropriate counseling and/or support service.

**Informed Voluntary Consent to Participate**

I have been fully informed and hereby consent to participate in the study described above. My right to decline to participate, or to withdraw in whole or part at any time, has been guaranteed.

---

teacher signature

---

date

### CONSENT FORM: Parent/Student

The purpose of this form is to request your voluntary participation in a study, and to insure that you understand the purposes of the study. Please read the following information carefully, then sign your name in the section marked, "Informed and Voluntary Consent to Participate," if you are willing to cooperate in the study.

The purpose of this study is to investigate level of psychological development in older high school students as it relates to adaptive classroom behavior.

Participants will be asked to complete one check list describing the behaviors of a high school student. Completion time will take about 15 minutes, and will be arranged at a time and a location convenient to the participant.

All data collected in the study will be kept in confidence. Participants will be assigned numbers for research analysis purposes. All personal identifying information will be destroyed upon completion of data collection and only group student means will be used for the study. No data will be used for any purpose except that expressly specified in this study.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You have the right to decline to participate, or to withdraw in part or in whole at any time.

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If any distress is caused by the tests or the summary, the researcher and or sponsor will assist the participant to establish contact with an appropriate counseling and/or support service.

**Informed Voluntary Consent to Participate**

I have been fully informed and hereby consent to participate in the study described above. My right to decline to participate, or to withdraw in whole or part at any time, has been guaranteed.

---

parent signature

---

date

---

student signature

---

date

Dear.....,

I am completing a study with adolescent development and wondered if you would be willing to help me. I need teenagers (17&18) to complete a survey which takes about 15 to 20 minutes. Your privacy will be completely protected because as soon as the data is collected names will be destroyed and only group descriptions will be used.

If you would be willing to participate, please read the enclosed description, have parents and students sign the permission form and bring it with you to the cafeteria 7th period on Thursday, (1-5-95). Arrangements have been made for you to ride the 3:00 o'clock bus home.

Enclosed is a gift certificate to Wendy's as a token thanks for your help.

Eunice Lockwood, Ed.S.  
School Psychologist

- - - - -  
-cut here-

If the above time is not convenient for your schedule and you would be willing to participate during your lunch hour on Friday, Jan. 6, please sign and return this form to the secretary in the Guidance office by Thur. (1-5-95) and meet me on Friday (1-6-95) at Room 128 during your lunch hour.

---

student name-Friday lunch participant

NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

## SITA PROFILE

1)    1    6    9    33    67    69    102

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 7 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Engulfment Anxiety

2)    2    13    18    32    36    43    65    71    83    87    88    91    92    94    97

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 15 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Practicing Mirroring

3)    12    16    25    29    30    38    45    53    57    66    95    101

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 12 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Dependency Denial

4)    3    4    8    10    23    26    40    48    51    61    79    90    96    103

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 14 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Separation Anxiety

5)    35    48    54    64    68    96    99    103

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 8 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Enmeshment

6)    22    31    37    41    44    46    50    72

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 8 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Peer Enmeshment

7)    10    14    19    55    60    82    93    98

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 8 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Nurturance

8)    5    11    17    24    31    39    46

\_\_\_\_\_

/ 7 X 10 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Healthy Separation

## CBCL PROFILE

1) Social Problems \_\_\_\_\_

2) Delinquent Beh \_\_\_\_\_

3) Aggressive Beh \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX B**

**MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT**

**SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION**

**TEST OF ADOLESCENCE**

**ATTITUDE AND FEELINGS SURVEY**

**Directions:** Listed below are a number of statements which best describe various feelings, attitudes, and behaviors that people have. Read each statement and then mark on your sheet:

- (a) if the statement is always true for you or you strongly agree with it,
- (b) if the statement is usually true for you or you generally agree with it,
- (c) if the statement is sometimes true for you or you slightly agree with it,
- (d) if the statement is hardly ever true for you or you generally disagree with it.
- (e) if the statement is never true for you or you strongly disagree with it.

Please answer all of the questions. If you have difficulty answering a particular question, choose the response which is closest to your feelings on that item, even though you may not feel strongly one way or another.

Please use a #2 pencil to complete the answer sheet and erase completely any answer you may wish to change. In marking your choices, be sure the number of the statement you have just read is the same number you are marking on the answer sheet.

1. Sometimes my parents are so overprotective I feel smothered.
2. I sometimes feel so powerful that it seems like there is no feat which is too difficult for me to conquer.
3. Being alone is a very scary idea for me.
4. Often I don't understand what people want out of a close relationship with me.
5. I enjoy being by myself and with others approximately the same.
6. I can't wait for the day that I can live on my own and am free from my parents.
7. Sometimes it seems that people really want to hurt me.
8. I worry about death a lot.
9. Most parents are overcontrolling and don't really want their children to grow up.
10. Sometimes I think how nice it was to be a young child when someone else took care of my needs.
11. I am friendly with several different types of people.
12. I don't see the point of most warm, affectionate relationships.
13. I particularly enjoy looking at my own body in the mirror.
14. One of my parents knows me so well they almost always know what I'm thinking.
15. If I told someone about the troubles I have, they would probably not understand.
16. I do best when I'm by myself and don't have other people around to bother me.
17. Even when I'm very close to another person, I feel I can be myself.
18. Usually when I'm doing something with my friends, I act like a leader.
19. I feel lonely when I'm away from my parents for any extended period of time.
20. During the past 10 years I have not slept more than 3 hours per night at any time.
21. Most people are basically worried about their own good and don't care about helping other people.
22. I feel so comfortable with one of my friends that I can tell him/her anything I feel.

23. I frequently worry about being rejected by my friends.
24. My friends and I have some common interests and some differences.
25. I can't feel that love has much of a place in my life.
26. I frequently worry about breaking up with my boyfriend/girlfriend.
27. My parents seem much more concerned about their own plans than they do about mine.
28. Even with my good friends I couldn't count on them to be there if I really needed them.
29. I feel that other people interfere with my ability "to do my own thing."
30. Being close to someone else is uncomfortable.
31. Although my best friend does things I do not like, I still care about him/her a great deal.
32. Considering most of the people I know, I find myself comparatively better off.
33. I often feel rebellious toward things my parents tell me to do.
34. I am comfortable with some degree of conflict in my close relationships.
35. Sometimes I feel very sad about having to say goodbye to a teacher I really like.
36. Sometimes I amaze myself with my own capabilities and talents.
37. I think about some of my friends when I'm alone because I miss them.
38. My life is fulfilled without having best friends.
39. Although I'm like my close friends in some ways, we're also different from each other in other ways.
40. I am quite worried that there might be a nuclear war in the next decade that would destroy much of this world.
41. My friendships tend to be of the "best-friend" kind.
42. I feel dominated by my boyfriend/girlfriend.
43. I feel that other people admire and look up to me.
44. One of my friends knows me so well I feel he/she can practically read my mind.
45. Friendship isn't worth the effort it takes.

46. While I like to get along well with my friends, if I disagree with something they're doing, I usually feel free to say so.
47. I have a habit of switching from one close relationship to another.
48. The teacher's opinion of me as a person is very important to me.
49. My parents seem very uninterested in what's going on with me.
50. I know some of my friends so well, it seems like I can read their minds.
51. I feel overpowered or controlled by people around me.
52. When I'm with a group of friends, I sometimes act like the leader and at other times more like a follower.
53. I think it is silly when people cry at the end of an emotional movie.
54. With my favorite teacher, I can share some of my most personal fears and concerns.
55. I believe that God looks over and protects me from danger.
56. It sometimes seems that my parents wish they hadn't ever had me.
57. I don't really need anyone.
58. It's quite a struggle for me to be a person independent from my parents.
59. I had many fears of monsters and/or ghosts when I was younger.
60. I'm quite worried about the possibility of one of my parents dying.
61. When I think of the people that are most important to me I wish I could be with them more and be closer to them emotionally.
62. I feel particularly comfortable when I'm doing things with a group of friends together, rather than by myself.
63. It's hard for me to really trust anyone.
64. One of my favorite teachers is amazingly similar to me in personality.
65. Even when they don't say it, I can sometimes tell that people admire me by the look in their eyes.
66. I don't really love anyone.
67. My parents keep close tabs on my whereabouts.
68. In school, I have a special relationship with one teacher that goes further than the average teacher-student bond.

- 69. I feel my parents' roles restrict my freedom too much.
- 70. I have not seen the sun shine for over a year now.
- 71. People sometimes seem amazed by my own abilities.
- 72. When I am truly friendly with someone, it's usually the case that they know both my good parts and my bad parts.
- 73. Eating delicious food is one of the greatest pleasures in my life.
- 74. I feel that the degree to which I satisfy the needs of my friends and they satisfy my needs is approximately equal.
- 75. There's a certain sense of oneness that I feel with other people.
- 76. I see dependency as a sign of weakness.
- 77. When I hope somebody will do something for me, I often find myself disappointed.
- 78. No one seems to understand me.
- 79. Before I go to sleep at night, I sometimes feel lonely and wish there were someone around to talk to or just to be with.
- 80. If I let myself get close to someone else I would probably get burned.
- 81. There is a sense of interconnectedness that links people of all kinds together.
- 82. God knows my life, I will go where he leads me.
- 83. Other people are easily impressed by me.
- 84. Sometimes it seems my parents really hate me.
- 85. I have no living relatives on this earth at the present time.
- 86. As long as I don't depend on anyone, I can't get hurt.
- 87. Knowing that other people find my physical appearance attractive is very pleasing to me.
- 88. I often sense admiration from those around me.
- 89. At home, I seem to be "in the way" a lot.
- 90. The idea of going to a large party where I would not know anyone is a scary one for me.
- 91. I feel special, compared to other people.

- 92. In my group of friends I am often the center of attention.
- 93. I preferred the younger years of life when I could rely more on my parents for guidance to get along.
- 94. I usually get positive "vibes" from other people regarding how they feel about me.
- 95. I can't have much of a need for close friendships with others.
- 96. I worry about being disapproved of by my teachers.
- 97. Other people seem to be impressed by my capabilities.
- 98. I would like to always live in the same town as my parents and siblings so we could spend a lot of time together.
- 99. My teachers give me advice about my social life.
- 100. I like parties best when my close friends are there and there is an intimate atmosphere.
- 101. My personal plans are more important than my relationships.
- 102. I am greatly looking forward to getting out from under the rule of my parents.
- 103. I would get upset if I found out my teacher was mad at me or disappointed in me.

**APPENDIX C**

**TABLES - MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS,  
AND ERROR OF MEAN**



Means, Standard Deviations, and Standard Error of MeanCBCL-TRF (Student scores)

<u>Subscale:</u>	<u>GR</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>MEAN</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>SE of MEAN</u>
<b>Social Problems</b>	I	28	50.6429	1.704	.322
	II	26	51.0769	1.742	.342
<b>Delinquent Behavior</b>	I	28	50.2143	.630	.119
	II	26	51.2692	1.951	.383
<b>Aggressive Behavior</b>	I	28	50.9643	2.333	.441
	II	26	54.8462	5.683	1.115

SITA

<b>Separation Anxiety</b>	I	28	25.4811	2.570	1.053
	II	26	25.0338	5.455	1.070
<b>Engulfment Anxiety</b>	I	28	32.3429	7.581	1.433
	II	26	33.1865	5.902	1.157
<b>Nurturance Seeking</b>	I	28	30.2232	4.977	.941
	II	26	33.3654	8.260	1.620
<b>Peer Enmeshment</b>	I	28	36.2054	6.071	1.147
	II	26	35.5288	6.267	1.229
<b>Teacher Enmeshment</b>	I	28	26.6964	7.841	1.482
	II	26	25.1923	6.943	1.362

<b>Practicing Mirroring</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>32.1618</b>	<b>5.500</b>	<b>1.039</b>
	<b>II</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33.3973</b>	<b>8.750</b>	<b>1.716</b>
<b>Need Denial</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21.4407</b>	<b>5.544</b>	<b>1.048</b>
	<b>II</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24.6800</b>	<b>5.318</b>	<b>1.043</b>
<b>Healthy Separation</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41.7314</b>	<b>5.148</b>	<b>.973</b>
	<b>II</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42.0877</b>	<b>3.434</b>	<b>.674</b>

## **Vita**

**Eunice Esther (Smith) Lockwood**

**Birthdate:** October 2, 1942

**Birthplace:** Remus, Michigan

**Education:**

1995 The College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
Doctor of Education

1986 The College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
Educational Specialist

1984 The College of William and Mary  
Williamsburg, Virginia  
Masters of Education

1967 Morehead State University  
Morehead, Kentucky  
Bachelor of Arts

1964 Kentucky Mountain Bible Institute  
Vancleve, Kentucky  
Diploma of Christian Education

SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION AND  
OLDER ADOLESCENTS WITH  
DISRUPTIVE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

ABSTRACT

The number of students with disruptive behaviors in the public school classroom has become an area of increasing concern for educators. Recent laws have increased the possibility of more students with significant behavior problems to be attending the public schools. Further, not only is there an increase in the number of students at risk for disruptive behavior, the type of behaviors being exhibited are more severe. In order to develop proper therapeutic remediation strategies for the behaviorally at risk student, it is important to identify specific roadblocks to the psychological development of adaptive behavior. Students who have been suspended from school multiple times may be representative of a group with specific patterns of psychological growth that are different from other students. This study was directed toward exploring possible variables that may set students who are frequently suspended apart from a control group of students who had no history of school suspensions.

A high school in the Tidewater area of Virginia was selected as a population with cultural and economic diversity. Students in the Target group, with multiple suspensions, were selected from the discipline records; students in the control group, with no suspensions, were selected from the regular education rolls. Twenty-six students participated in the Target group and 28 students participated in the control group. All students completed the SITA; 8 subscales were used which attempt to measure the various subphases of separation-

individuation. Teachers completed the CBCL-TRF to rate adaptive classroom functioning on 3 subscales.

Group means were compared using either a t-test or an adjusted t-test for level of significance. The CBCL showed a significant difference between the groups regarding degree of anger turned outward and in level of regard for societal norms with the Target group showing more aggressive behavior and less regard for societal expectations. No significant difference was seen between the 2 groups of students on the development of social skills.

Analysis of the SITA subscales showed a significant difference on 1 of the 8 subscales. The target group evidenced higher denial of attachment needs with more difficulty understanding feelings of love, closeness, and friendship. No significant difference was evidenced in level of development in separation anxiety, engulfment anxiety, nurturance seeking, peer enmeshment, teacher enmeshment, practicing mirroring, or healthy separation.

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